

## **How Covid-19 is changing our perception of organisational performance**

### **New measures of success for healthcare in Scotland**

**Charles Darwin suggested that the species that survives is the one that is best able to adapt and adjust to the changing environment in which it finds itself. Many years later his theories have great resonance for healthcare organisations facing the challenges of the pandemic.**

The expectation beginning to emerge from bodies such as Audit Scotland and The Academy of Medical Sciences is that NHS Scotland needs to maximise its ability to adapt and anticipate in this highly ambiguous and ever-changing landscape:

#### **‘NHS Scotland Overview Report’**

Audit Scotland intends to publish its NHS report early in 2021. Topics likely to feature include: the financial impact of Covid-19; governance and risk management arrangements; the availability of essential equipment; and innovative practices that NHS boards and partners have adopted that might help transform health and social care for the future.

#### **‘Covid-19: How public audit in Scotland is responding’**

In its briefing paper published in June 2020, Audit Scotland also announced potential themes and areas of interest for future public audits. These include:

- Support for the economy and employment
- Financial sustainability and delivery of strategic objectives
- Collaborative leadership and joint working in response to the pandemic
- The equality impact of Covid-19 e.g. low earners, younger people, women, the BAME community, people with a disability, those living in more deprived areas and lone parents
- Public service adaptation in response to Covid-19
- Community engagement
- Cyber security, digital resilience and data
- Governance and accountability (including fraud, error and litigation)

#### **‘Preparing for a challenging winter 2020-21’**

With excess winter deaths in Scotland already as high as 4,800 (2017/18), the Academy of Medical Sciences lists four additional challenges that have great potential to exacerbate winter pressures on the health and social care system, by increasing demand on standard care as well as limiting surge capacity:

- A large resurgence of COVID-19 nationally, with local or regional epidemics
- Disruption of the health and social care systems due to reconfigurations to respond to and reduce transmission of COVID-19 with a knock-on effect on the ability of the NHS to deal with non-COVID-19 care
- A backlog of non-COVID-19 care
- A possible influenza epidemic that will add to the challenges above

The Academy is encouraging urgent preparation to mitigate the risks of a particularly challenging winter 2020/21, including:

- Minimising community SARS-CoV-2 transmission and impact, including: tailoring guidance for commercial, public and domestic properties on optimising indoor environments (temperature, humidity and ventilation) to reduce virus transmission indoors, and significantly expanding the capacity of the TTI programme to cope with increasing demands over the winter and ensure that it can respond quickly and accurately. Testing should harness partnerships between the NHS, academia and industry.
- Organising health and social care settings to maximise infection control and ensure that COVID-19 and routine care can take place in parallel
- Improving public health surveillance for COVID-19, influenza and other winter diseases
- Minimising influenza transmission and impact

### **What does this mean for health and social care leaders?**

Much is expected of senior leadership teams in all our public, private and third sector health and social care services. Not only must they forge new paths through Covid-19 together, but also conceive and create joint plans for the new services required beyond Covid-19 in a significantly different patient/client demand landscape.

Organisational adaptation is incredibly dependent upon its senior leaders being able to reflect and flex together. They are the drivers of the organisational remodelling needed to withstand the tsunamis of change.

Michael West and others have undertaken extensive research into the factors which result in high performing teams. Their studies into team effectiveness reveal that reflexive teams are more productive, effective, and innovative than those that don't reflect on a regular basis. In fact, taking time out as a team leads to an average 25% uplift on performance.

Now, more than ever, senior teams will need to invest time to be reflexive together, in particular:

- **'Walking the fine line' between focusing on the here and now (so critical in a crisis) and looking to the future** – what does this look like as we enter a new phase of living with the pandemic and restoration after the peak of the crisis? The tension here will include decisions about what, how and when in relation to restoring business-as-usual practices, including governance and assurance.
- **Stocktaking the organisational culture** – reflecting on how culture has impacted the organisation's response to Covid - alongside consideration of the learning and its impact on the desired future culture.

AOD supports senior teams in developing cross boundary collaboration and building their capacity to lead large scale adaptation to this ongoing 'new normal'.

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